

VZCZCXRO6748

PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH
DE RUEHNH #0199/01 2541216

ZNR UUUUU

P 111216Z SEP 06

FM AMCONSUL NAHA

TO RUEHC/RRF DOS PRIORITY

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO RHMFIUU/18WG CP KADENA AB JA

RHMFIUU/5AF YOKOTA AB JA

RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RUSFNSG/CDR10THASG TORII STATION JA

RHMFIUU/CG FIRST MAW

RUHBABA/CG III MEF CAMP COURTNEY JA

RHMFIUU/CG III MEF

RUHBANB/CG MCB CAMP BUTLER JA

RUHBBEA/CG THIRD FSSG CAMP KINSER JA

RUHBABA/CG THIRD MARDIV CAMP COURTNEY JA

RUHBABA/CG THIRD MARDIV

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

RHMFIUU/COMFLEACT OKINAWA JA

RHMFIUU/COMMARCORBASESJAPAN CAMP BUTLER JA

RHMFIUU/COMMARFORPAC

RHHMHAA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI

RHOVVKG/COMSEVENTHFLT

RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA

RUHBVMA/CTF 76

RUYLBAB/DOSSPECREP OKINAWA JA

RUESDJ/FBIS OKINAWA JA

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY

RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI

RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI

RHHMBRA/JICPAC PEARL HARBOR HI

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC

RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA PRIORITY

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY

RHMFIUU/NAVCRIMINVSERVRA OKINAWA JA

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC

RUHBANB/OKINAWA AREA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CAMP BUTLER JA

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

RUEAHIC/USARPAC COMMAND CENTER FT SHAFTER HI

RUEHKO/USDAO TOKYO JA

RUALBCC/YOKOTA AB HQ USFJ

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NAHA 000199

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/J; SECDEF FOR ISP/J; USFJ FOR J5, J4

TAGS: MARR PINS JA

SUBJECT: OKINAWA MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS BODE WELL FOR
IMPLEMENTING REALIGNMENT AGREEMENTS

(SBU) Summary: The September 10 municipal assembly elections, held in 26 Okinawan cities, towns and villages, showed some positive trends for implementing the Okinawa-related portions of the USG-GOJ Alliance Transformation and Realignment (ATARA) report. Conservatives retained the majority and gained a seat in the Nago City, the intended destination of a replacement facility for Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma. Conservatives retained the majority in Ginowan City, current host to MCAS Futenma, and Okinawa City, the second-largest city in the prefecture and co-host to Kadena Air Force Base, despite small gains by anti-base reformists. End Summary.

(U) 428 candidates stood for 361 positions in 26 different municipal assembly elections, all held on September 10. The two Okinawan daily newspapers, the Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times, provided extensive coverage of the results available from 25 of

the 26 municipalities. With just 18% more candidates than there were seats, there were no large swings between conservative and reformist numbers. Nevertheless, there were positive results in three cities that are important to ATARA initiatives related to Okinawa.

(SBU) Conservatives retained and added slightly to their majority of seats in Nago City, host of Camp Schwab and the planned location of the MCAS Futenma replacement facility (FRF).

Nago voters chose 16 conservatives, ten reformists and one neutral candidate for their 27-member assembly. Both Okinawa daily newspapers groused that conservative candidates refused to focus on the FRF as an issue, so they never properly engaged the reformist camp's explicit opposition. The Ryukyu Shimpo acknowledged that the result was a vote of confidence in Mayor Yoshikazu SHIMABUKURO, whose successful January 2006 mayoral campaign emphasized economic development and improving social services.

(U) The candidate receiving the most votes in Nago was Yohei KISHIMOTO, eldest son of the late Tateo KISHIMOTO, the former Nago City Mayor best known for having accepted the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) plan to relocate MCAS Futenma to Nago City, and who later anointed current Mayor Shimabukuro as his conservative successor. Another new member, Zenko NAKAMURA, leads a group opposed to construction of the FRF in Nago, while former assembly member Yasuhiro MIYAGI, who led the anti-base campaign during the 1997 Nago City referendum on the SACO FRF plan, lost his seat.

(U) Ginowan City, current host of MCAS Futenma, elected three more reformist assembly members than before, but left in place the conservative majority, now 18 seats out of 28 total. Okinawa City, the second-largest city in Okinawa and co-host of

NAHA 00000199 002 OF 002

Kadena Air Force Base, added two reformists to its assembly, but conservatives retained their majority, taking 18 of 30 seats. Six women ran for and won Okinawa City assembly seats, which was proclaimed by the papers as a "women's wind" following Mitsuko TOMON's April 2006 mayoral victory.

(SBU) Conclusion/Comment: The results in Nago City boded well for implementing the FRF plan, and results in Ginowan City and Okinawa City were only mildly negative. Municipal assemblies are the Greek chorus of local politics, with no active role to play but providing the mood music in which municipal executives-and our military bases-operate. Conservatives having a slightly stronger majority in the Nago City Assembly should make it easier for the GOJ to coordinate with the city in proceeding with the FRF. The Ginowan City and Okinawa City assemblies remained majority conservative, and the small reformist gains will offer their vocally anti-base mayors little help when the city executives and the city legislatures disagree on base issues. End comment/conclusion.

MAHER